

# Accreditation in higher professional education in The Netherlands

Presentation for EURASHE 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference  
Gyöngyös, Hungary, 5-6 June 2003

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# Characteristics of higher professional education in The Netherlands (1)

- 47 publicly funded Universities of Professional Education (UPEs; “hogescholen”)
- > 300,000 students; 2/3 of all students in public HE
- UPEs offer bachelor and some master programmes
- Most UPE masters are privately funded (by students/employers)
- All bachelors (visiting committees) and many UPE masters (DVC, visiting committees, validation by UK university) have been assessed



# Characteristics of higher professional education in The Netherlands (2)

- 47 UPEs are collectively represented in HBO-raad
- Tasks HBO-raad:
  - Promotion of financial and other interests
  - Employers' organisation
  - Promotion of mutual consultation and administrative coordination
  - Implementation of external quality assessment (visiting committees)



# QA department of HBO-raad

- Organises and coordinates quality assessments
- Provides professional secretaries for visiting committees
- Visiting committees assess all UPE programmes per subject
- Since 1990:
  - > 70 assessment reports
  - > 1000 programmes have been assessed (many twice)

# From quality assessment to accreditation of programmes in higher professional education

<i>Cycle</i>	<i>Starting</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>
first	1990	Pioneering, improvement oriented, coordination by HBO-raad
second	1997	Formal assessment framework, more accountability, pilot accreditations, coordination by HBO-raad
third	2003/04	Accreditation and coordination by NAO; Netherlands Accreditation Organisation, accountability oriented, institution chooses organisation for quality assessment



# Reasons for accreditation of study programmes

- International benchmarking B. and M. (Bologna)
- Transparency through minimum standards/threshold
- Same requirements for public and private providers
- Independent judgments (NAO) and clear sanctions (accreditation condition for recognition & funding)
- Plurality in methods for quality assessment (institutions can choose national and international organisations for conducting the assessment)

# Accreditation: the Dutch way (1)

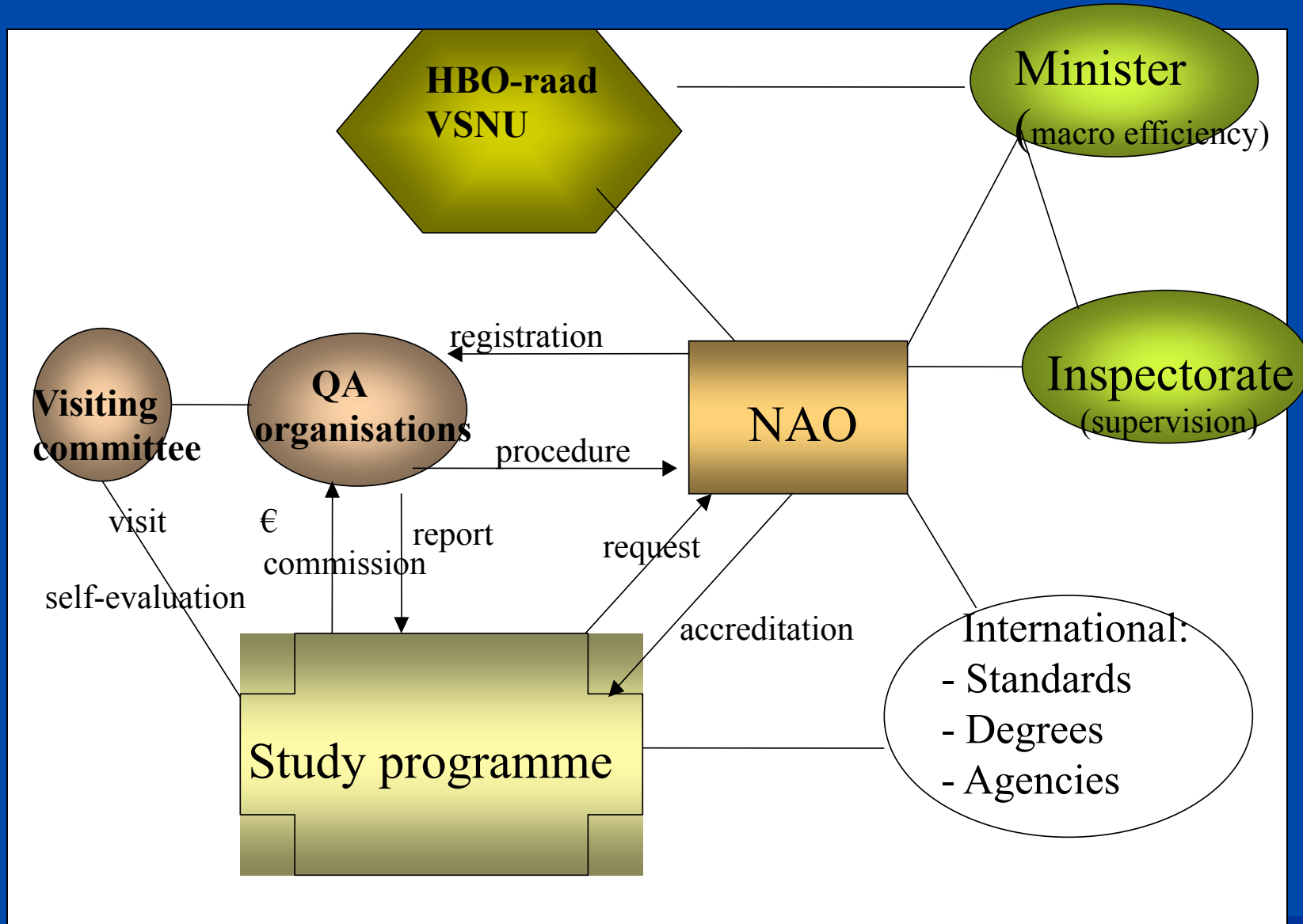
- Accreditation necessary for:
  - Funding
  - Recognition of degrees
  - Student assistance (grants and loans)
- Valid for 6 years
- Each institution is responsible for requesting accreditation in time (1 year before accreditation expires)



# Accreditation: the Dutch way (2)

- Accreditation request can be made after:
  - a quality assessment report;
  - based on self-evaluation of the programme
- Quality assessment report and accreditation report are public
- If NAO decides that quality assessment is not carried out properly then *1 year* to carry out new QA
- If NAO comes to negative decision on accreditation request then *2 years* for improvement, but student enrolment must stop!

# Accreditation: the playing field



# Implications for QA organisations

- Registration of QA organisations by NAO
- Should be able to compare programmes and incorporate international dimension in assessment
- QA department of HBO-raad will become independent QA organisation: Netherlands Quality Agency (NQA)



# Accreditation criteria

- Aims: level, orientation, subject specific
- Programme: curriculum, teaching & learning, testing, etc.
- Personnel: quality and quantity
- Conditions: facilities, student counseling
- Quality management: evaluations, improvement, involvement of stakeholders
- Output: obtained qualifications, success rates



# Criteria for approval of new programmes

- NAO assesses quality of request ('business plan'); NAO can consult external experts
- Same accreditation criteria apply, with conditions for continuity (guarantee to graduate, sufficient investments, sufficient financial buffer) instead of output
- Minister: macro efficiency; advisory committee



# International outlook

- Joint Dutch-Flemish accreditation organisation
- Cooperation with other European accreditation agencies; mutual recognition?
- Preserving diversity:
  - Accountability focused but emphasis on institutions' aims; level, orientation, subject
  - Several QA organisations
- Is a common European approach to QA possible?
- Ba and Ma continue to be different within Europe!

